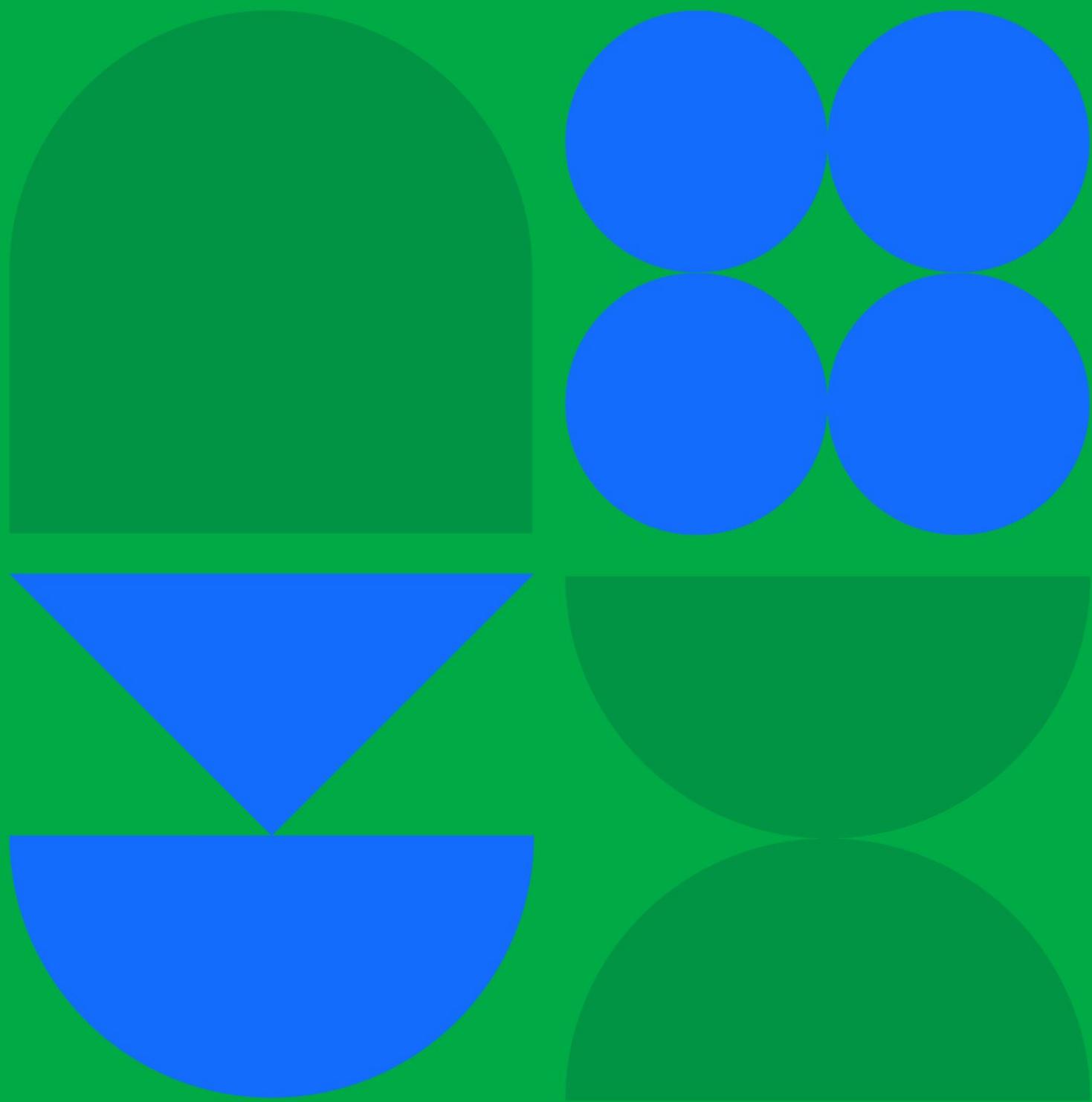
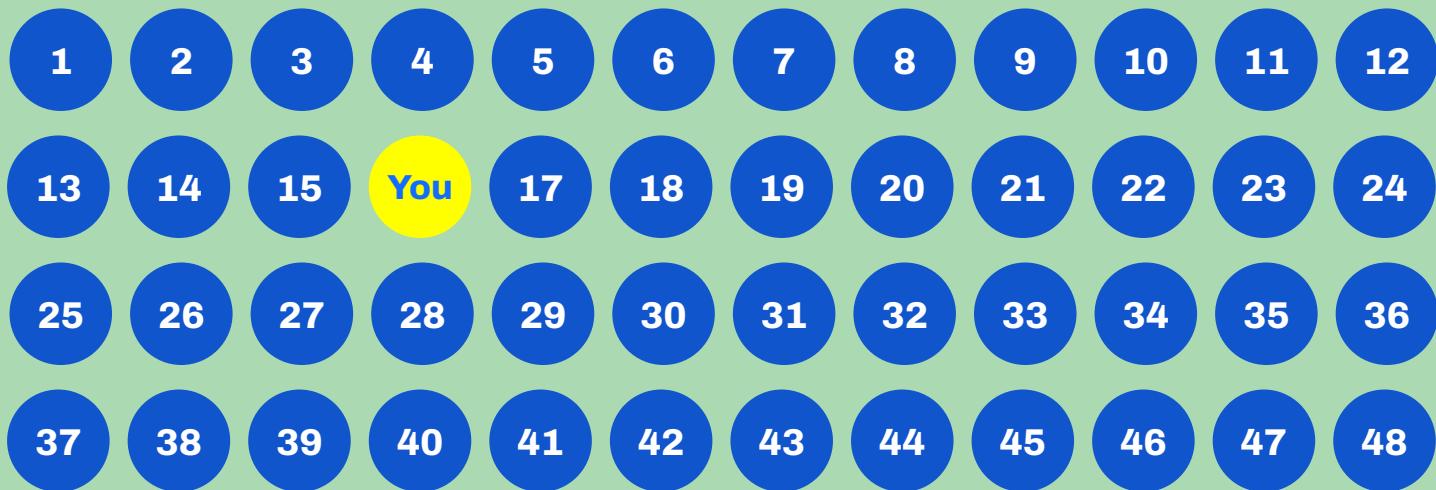


**VICTORIA CITIZENS'  
SAANICH ASSEMBLY**

# Welcome Kit



**Public Version: Some information has been redacted.**



# Congratulations!

We are pleased to confirm that you are 1 of 48 members **randomly selected** to participate on the Victoria Saanich Citizens' Assembly on Municipal Amalgamation.

**Serving on a Citizens' Assembly is a special responsibility.**

Together, you and your fellow members will learn, discuss, deliberate, and create recommendations.

It is up to each member to work in good faith on behalf of all Victoria and Saanich residents whom you will endeavour to represent and serve.

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# Welcome from the Assembly Chair



Dear Members,

On behalf of the Councils of the City of Victoria and the District of Saanich, I extend warm congratulations and heartfelt thanks to each of you for generously volunteering your time to serve on the Victoria Saanich Citizens' Assembly on Municipal Amalgamation.

Over the course of the next 12 months, you will have the opportunity to learn more about this beautiful and vibrant region you call home. Together, we'll navigate the intricacies of the two municipalities, understand the services they provide and the infrastructure they uphold, and develop a clear understanding of what's at stake for the future. Ultimately, our collective efforts will guide us in determining whether to maintain the status quo of two distinct municipalities, pursue closer integration, or initiate a process of full amalgamation.

Your role in this assembly is pivotal. As Assembly members, your insights will help shape the foundation of good local governance and pave the way for informed decisions regarding municipal amalgamation. We'll work collaboratively to develop guiding values, identify key issues, outline recommendations, and establish conditions necessary for any potential merger.

Citizens' assemblies are tried and tested forums utilized worldwide to address complex policy matters, and my team and I are fully equipped to support you every step of the way. Whether you require research assistance, help understanding and reviewing materials, or logistical support, rest assured, we're here to facilitate your journey until the completion of your final report.

While this experience will be new to you, this will be the 39th assembly which I have had the privilege of chairing over the past fifteen years, and the second on the topic of the possible amalgamation of municipalities in British Columbia.

As the chair of the Assembly, I am committed to ensuring that each member's voice is heard and that the process remains impartial and rigorous throughout. You can count on me to uphold the integrity of our discussions and strive to enrich our deliberations with valuable insights.

The conversation about the amalgamation of Victoria and Saanich has a long history, and we are honoured that you have agreed to add your voice to it.

Again, my congratulations and thanks,

Peter MacLeod, Assembly Chair

# The Mandate of the Citizens' Assembly

## Mandate of the Citizens' Assembly

The Assembly will explore the costs, benefits and disadvantages of amalgamation between the City of Victoria and the District of Saanich.

### As a member of the Assembly, you will:

- Learn about the values, concerns and needs of residents of Victoria and Saanich;
- Understand different perspectives on issues such as municipal growth, service delivery, governance, capital and infrastructure needs, land use planning, emergency services, and strategic and regulatory frameworks, and more; and
- Consider how various opportunities and outcomes will affect people from both municipalities.

At each meeting of the Assembly, you will have the opportunity to learn from and speak with experts, academics, municipal administrators, and more. You will also work with your fellow members to understand new perspectives, identify common values, consider the issues and priorities, and develop recommendations.

### What is "Amalgamation"?

Amalgamation is a form of incorporation involving two or more existing municipalities. While relatively uncommon since the advent of regional districts to facilitate regional and sub-regional service partnerships,

neighbouring municipalities have considered amalgamation throughout B.C.'s history.

## The Outputs of the Assembly

The Citizens' Assembly will detail their work and guidance in an interim and a final report which will be presented to the two municipalities. The final report will include the Assembly's recommendation(s) on amalgamation and could include suggestions related to service integration.

## The Outcome of the Assembly

The Assembly is one stage in a process. Whatever the Assembly recommends, it would have to be endorsed by both councils and approved by a majority of voters in both municipalities during a referendum. The plan would then require the approval of the Government of British Columbia.

## Membership

The 48 members of the Victoria Saanich Citizens' Assembly have been randomly selected by a blind draw called a Civic Lottery. Twenty-seven participants are from Saanich and twenty-one from Victoria in rough proportion to their relative populations. Other demographic factors, including age, income, racial identity and local geography, have been considered to compose a final assembly that is roughly proportional to the two municipalities at large and representative of the people who call either place home.

# Guiding Principles of the Assembly

The Victoria-Saanich Citizens' Assembly on Municipal Amalgamation will conduct itself according to these nine principles:

1. Openness and Transparency

The Assembly will regularly share its learning and deliberations with the public on an ongoing and predictable basis.

2. Accountability and Legitimacy

The Assembly will work within a defined mandate and budget on behalf of the residents of Saanich and Victoria. The Assembly will deliver its Final Report directly to the Municipal Councils of Saanich and Victoria.

3. Effective Representation

The Assembly will be charged with the responsibility of representing the needs and interests of the residents of Saanich and Victoria. The members of the Assembly will be selected to broadly represent the demographics of the municipalities.

4. Accessibility

The Assembly will provide reasonable supports to address barriers that may prevent a member of the Assembly from participating successfully.

5. Independence

The Assembly will have full independence to determine how to best fulfill its mandate, under the advisement of an experienced, third-party consultant who will facilitate the Assembly process.

6. Well-Informed

The Assembly's recommendations will be informed by a range of perspectives and sources of expertise including the technical report.

7. Balance

The Assembly will consider a diversity of voices and perspectives in its deliberations. The Chair will work to ensure that there is room for all voices.

8. Collaborative Decision-Making

The Assembly will work towards consensus when drafting their recommendations, while also respecting and documenting differing perspectives among its members.

9. Respect

The Assembly will strive to be conscientious and fair-minded in their deliberations and in their consultations with the residents of Saanich and Victoria.

# About Citizens' Assemblies

A Citizens' Assembly is representative body of everyday people brought together to learn, deliberate, and issue consensus recommendations to policymakers on important public issues.

**The world's first Citizens' Assembly was created in British Columbia in 2004.** Since then, Canada has become a global leader in the use of citizen deliberation in policymaking with over 50 similar processes held across the country in the last 15 years, and nearly 1,000 around the world.

Citizens' Assemblies, also known as Reference Panels or Citizens' Juries, can be made up of anywhere from 28 to 100+ members. They are:

- **Randomly selected** using a special 'Civic Lottery' method;
- **Representative**, as the selection model also ensures the Assembly reflects the diversity of the population or community; and,
- **Deliberative** due to a rigorous public learning curriculum, facilitated small table conversations, and a decision-making process that ensures broad consensus.

## Citizens Assemblies in Canada and around the world

Citizens' Assemblies have prompted new policy on reproductive rights and same sex marriage in Ireland, spurred ambition on climate policy in France, UK, and Scotland, and brought more voices into policy making and governance in Iceland, Belgium, and Italy.

Here in Canada, Citizens' Assemblies have made recommendations on policy issues around digital identity and privacy, regional transportation priorities, housing legislation, supervised injection services, primary care reform, compensation for municipal councillors, airport noise mitigation, pharmaceutical insurance, mental health policy, cancer care, public housing, and more.

One previous Assembly here on Vancouver Island, involving the communities of Duncan and North Cowichan, also considered municipal amalgamation.

# What to Expect During Assembly Sessions

## Meeting Times and Location

Each Assembly session will begin promptly at 9:30 a.m. and will adjourn no later than 4:30 p.m. Coffee, tea and a light breakfast will be served from 8:30 a.m.

Meetings will be held at one or more accessible venues in Victoria, Saanich, or the nearby area. We will communicate the locations as soon they are confirmed, by email and phone. Our team will help ensure you are able to get to every meeting, regardless of location.

## An Assembly Meeting

During each meeting, you will move between:

- Presentations which offer the opportunity to learn from a wide variety of guest experts providing a range of perspectives;
- Question and answer sessions following each presentation, and throughout the process;
- Plenary discussions in which everyone is listening and participating in the same discussion;
- Small group discussions, in which members have the chance to examine one topic or idea more closely.

Along the way there will be breaks for meals, refreshments, and reflection.

## What to Bring and Wear

The Assembly will not be formal, so please dress comfortably. Consider bringing a light layer in case the venue is chilly.

We will provide pens, paper, other work materials, and printed copies of the documents when you arrive. We also recommend bringing a reusable water bottle and coffee mug to help cut down on waste at the event.

## Other Members

During an Assembly, you will meet people you like and immediately agree with, and you will also meet people who hold very different views, and have had very different experiences from yours. This is normal — after all, an Assembly is meant to represent everyone.

To help everybody get to know each other a little bit better, we will work with all members to write a short biographical “profile.” This profile will be shared among members of the Assembly and featured on the project website.

# What to Expect from Each Other

We are excited to bring everyone together to talk about these important issues and make recommendations that will help decide how Victoria and Saanich plan for the future.

During the course of the Assembly, we may discuss sensitive subjects. While engaging in these discussions, **we don't always need to agree, but we do need to disagree respectfully.** Please keep the following in mind:

**Listen with the same passion with which you want to be heard.** Please listen carefully and seriously to the perspectives and opinions of your fellow members. Please refrain from interrupting your fellow members.

**Share talk time.** Everyone should be able to have their say. Sometimes a few voices can be louder than others, which prevents us from hearing everyone's perspectives. Facilitators will work hard to make sure that everyone is heard, but you can help by being conscious and considerate of who hasn't had a chance to speak.

**Consider those who aren't part of the Assembly.** Only 48 members of the community could be selected for this Assembly, so we ask that all the members think about the perspectives of your neighbours, colleagues, friends, and fellow residents who aren't present for our discussions. As we start to think about

recommendations, for example, your facilitators will ask, "How would this action affect others in the community?"

**Give people the benefit of the doubt.** We are likely to discuss sensitive subjects that people will feel strongly about. We ask that everyone assume the best of others' intentions and meanings, and be forgiving.

That said, **we absolutely will not tolerate hateful or discriminatory views or language.**

**Every member of the Assembly belongs on the Assembly.** Every member of the Assembly has a wealth of experience living and working in this region, which means that every member has valuable perspectives to contribute and learn from. Everyone has the right to be heard and belong in this space.

**Creating a welcoming space is everyone's responsibility.** Please help ensure that every member has the ability and opportunity to be comfortable in shared spaces by:

- Avoiding wearing strong perfumes, colognes, or scented products that could trigger allergies or sensitivities;
- Listening attentively when others are speaking; and,
- Respecting personal boundaries and avoiding unnecessary physical contact.

# What to Expect Between Sessions

## No Homework

We may occasionally send you interesting articles to read or resources to consult in between sessions, including things suggested by Assembly members themselves or members of the broader public. But these will always be optional. Everything you need to learn and participate fully in the Assembly will be provided or presented at the Assembly meetings themselves. No homework required.

## Checking-in

We may periodically call or email you just to check in and see if you have any questions or unaddressed concerns about the Assembly's work or process. You can also feel free to check in with us by phone or email anytime.

## Public Meetings

There will be four public meetings held during the Assembly, two in November and two in February. These meetings will be held in the evening at a local, accessible venue. One or two may be hosted online. Assembly members will be requested to attend at least two of these meetings. They are opportunities for the wider public to learn about the Assembly's work, meet and interact with members of the Assembly, and contribute their voice to your deliberations.

## A Note on Social Media

We ask all members of the Assembly to refrain from posting on social media about the proceedings of the Assembly. This shows respect to other members and helps to encourage candour and the free exploration of different topics during your deliberations.

# Participation Information

## Meeting Venues

Each venue will be local, accessible, comfortable, brightly lit, inviting, and provide a great space to listen and work.

## Travel

If you are comfortable and able to make your own way to the meetings, you will be reimbursed for your cost of travel.

- Driving: Flat rate of \$5.00 per meeting.
- Public transit: Reimbursed subsequent to meetings for a round trip at the posted fare.
- Cabs or rideshares: Reimbursed subsequent to meetings with the submission of a digital or physical receipt.
- Parking: Arranged by the Assembly.

If you have any difficulty arranging travel to the Assembly meetings or concerns about reimbursements, please let the Assembly team know.

## Meals and Snacks

For each Meeting day, you will be provided with coffee, tea, a light breakfast, lunch, and an afternoon snack.

Please tell us about any dietary restrictions when you fill out the onboarding form. Reach out to us with any specific questions or concerns.

## Caretaking

Your participation in the Assembly should not be limited by caretaking responsibilities.

The Assembly will reimburse any reasonable costs of eldercare or childcare during Assembly sessions and travel time.

We ask that you first discuss this need with a Assembly team member, provide an estimate, and once approved submit an invoice/receipt from the caretaker including the rate and number of hours of care. You will have to arrange for the caretaker — because of insurance reasons we cannot do this.

## Reimbursements

Reimbursements will be processed following each Assembly meetings and will be sent by e-transfer, unless otherwise requested and arranged.

## Social Media

We ask everyone to refrain from posting on social media about the proceedings of the Assembly. This shows respect to other members and helps to encourage candour and the free exploration of different topics during your deliberations.

# Frequently Asked Questions

## **What can I do to prepare?**

Once you've read this package and completed the checklist on page 5 of this document, you're good to go!

## **What should I read in advance of the first meeting?**

We may share a few optional reading materials prior to some Assembly meetings, but it is not required that you review this material.

Throughout the meetings guest speakers and subject matter experts will provide background information about municipal government, public services, and other pertinent subjects. Staff from both municipalities will also be on hand throughout the process to help answer any questions that might arise during your discussions.

## **Will food be provided?**

Yes. We will provide a light breakfast, a healthy lunch, and snacks throughout the day. **If you have any food restrictions, please note them in the online onboarding form.**

Please bring a travel mug to help us reduce our waste.

## **How can I request additional accessibility accommodations?**

Give us a call as soon as possible, and we will work with you to make sure your accessibility needs are reasonably accommodated.

## **Will I get reimbursed for my travel to the Assembly?**

Yes. We will reimburse your travel to the Assembly sessions. When filling out the onboarding form we ask you questions about how you plan to get to and from Assembly sessions. This will help us manage travel expenses.

## **Can I bring my child(ren) or a guest to the Assembly?**

Though you may want to share this experience with your friend or loved one, the Assembly can only be attended by its members.

We urge parents of children older than two to make arrangements for at-home childcare, which the Assembly will reimburse. Please reach out to us to discuss different options.

## **How do I inquire about a reimbursement for childcare or eldercare?**

If you require childcare or eldercare to be able to participate, please let a Assembly team member person know right away.

Also: When filling out the onboarding form we ask you questions about the possible need for childcare or eldercare.

We will need an invoice/receipt from your care provider confirming the hours and their rate.

# Frequently Asked Questions, continued

## **What if something comes up and I have to miss an Assembly session?**

We understand that emergencies may arise that could make it impossible for you to participate on a given day. However, out of fairness to the other residents who volunteered but were not selected to serve on the Assembly, we ask that you do everything you can to attend each meeting.

## **Who funds the Assembly?**

In 2022, Victoria, Saanich, and the Province agree to contribute \$250,000 each for a total of \$750,000 toward the cost of the Citizens' Assembly.

## **How will you ensure the impartiality of the process?**

The final report of the Assembly will be produced by the members, with support from a facilitation team who will help guide table discussions and transcribe notes. External experts will be available to answer questions and share knowledge but they will not have any involvement in writing or editing your final recommendations. Members will have the opportunity to review the final report before it is published to ensure it accurately reflects the deliberations of the Assembly.

## **What is the Public Service Pledge?**

The Public Service Pledge is similar to a participant code of conduct. It affirms your commitment to participating fully in the

Assembly process, treating others with respect, and upholding the integrity of the process.

You can digitally sign the Public Service Pledge in the online onboarding form. *If you have any concerns about it, please let one of our team members know.*

## **What is the Media Release Form?**

The Assembly team and media outlets will be documenting this process. The Media Release Form is a document you sign to give permission to the Assembly, to Victoria and to Saanich to use your image in places that may include public websites, reports, social media, news media, and in future projects. You can digitally sign the Media Release Form in the online onboarding form. *If you have any concerns about it, please let one of our team members know.*

## **Why are Assembly members' profiles required?**

Collecting and publicly posting member's names and profiles supports the transparency of the assembly as a public democratic process. If you have question or concerns please give us a call.

## **Who do I contact if I have any questions?**

Our team is here to support you throughout the Assembly process. Think of the team as your "civic concierge." If there's something you need or a question you want answered, you can reach the team using our direct-line.

# The Core Assembly Team



## **Peter MacLeod – Assembly Chair**

Peter is the founder and principal of MASS LBP, a Toronto-based firm specializing in public engagement and citizens' assemblies. A leading expert in democratic innovation, he has pioneered the use of citizens' assemblies in Canada and abroad, helping governments involve citizens in policy-making through inclusive and structured methods. His work aims to enhance democratic governance by fostering dialogue between citizens and decision-makers.



## **Richard Johnson – Facilitation Team Lead**

Richard is a Senior Associate at MASS LBP and an experienced facilitator. Over the past decade, he has led or supported over two dozen citizens' assemblies and public engagements. Recently, he chaired the OurCare British Columbia Priorities Assembly on Primary Care and the Ontario Citizens' Assembly on Workplace Democracy.



## **Sarah Yaffe – Program Design**

Sarah is a leader in public engagement programming with extensive experience in event management, logistics, and program development. She has spearheaded the program design for the second edition of the Citizens' Assembly on Democratic Expression and served as Project Director for its Capstone Assembly.



## **Chris Ellis – Project and Civic Lottery Manager**

Chris developed the MASS Civic Lottery process and authored the Civic Lottery guide now used internationally. Over the 15+ years at MASS LBP Chris has design and delivered 50+ Civic Lottery processes for Citizens' Assemblies across the country.

*You'll also get to meet our wonderful facilitation team at our first meeting in September.*